



PERCIVALL POTT Esq^r

*Engraved by Heath, from a Picture
Of Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

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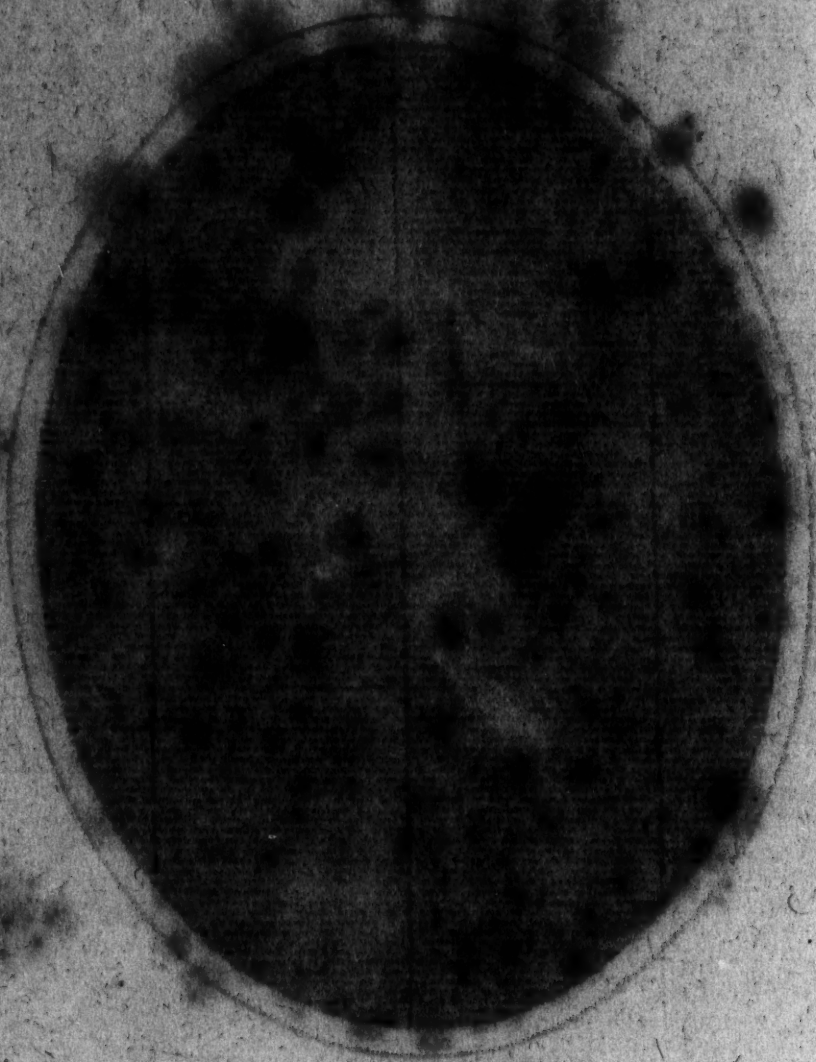
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A
SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE
LIFE

MR. HERMAN POTT

London, 1841



PERCIVALL POTT Esq^r

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of Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

Printed & Sold by J. Johnson, St Paul's Church Yard.

A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
L I F E
OF
MR. PERCIVALL POTT.

Charles (The Farmer) Pott

*This ACCOUNT is prefixed to Mr. EARLE's Edition
of the Works of Mr. P. POTT.*



A

SHORT ACCOUNT, &c.

THE writings of Mr. POTT had been universally read, and many of his improvements in the practice of surgery had come into general use, for several years before his death: most of his opinions have already stood the test of extensive experience; and it is hardly to be doubted, that, whatever improvements may hereafter be made in this progressive art, his works will be esteemed as a valuable monument of genius and of skill, for the times in which the author lived, to the latest posterity.

A complete edition of these works, accompanied with a short historical account of the author, cannot, I think, at this time be un-

acceptable to the public. Works of a scientific nature are never known to be perfect while their author lives, and their value is lessened by the prospect of alterations and amendments, which he may be induced, from time to time, to make in them; but, independent of the late event which has put a period to the useful labours of Mr. Pott, an edition of his works is now absolutely wanted, as few copies of them remain in the book-fellers' hands.

The medical world will, no doubt, be disappointed to find, that little new, upon any chirurgical subject, was discovered among the papers of an author, whose pen was seldom long unemployed; this was not the effect of accident, or of inattention, for the last years of Mr. Pott's life were not less industriously spent than the earlier part. Nor was the spirit of inquiry or of emulation at all diminished by his advanced age, but of design. He had given his friends every reason to expect that no manuscript would be left; and often censured,
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in strong terms, the imprudence of authors leaving imperfect papers behind them, which their relations seldom have discretion or disinterestedness enough to suppress. My constant intercourse with him, both on business and in his leisure-hours, gave me an opportunity of knowing his sentiments on some subjects which had occurred since his last publication. Such of these as materially affect the doctrines he has delivered, I have noticed in this edition, and have endeavoured to add to the general usefulness of the work, as far as my other engagements would permit, without detaining it too long from the press.

With regard to the following narrative, my near connexion with the family of Mr. Pott furnishes me with the most authentic information concerning every transaction of his life, which can in any way interest mankind, and has probably been the principal reason which has induced many of my friends to urge me to undertake this publication. I am not insensible that the author of these volumes deserves

a more accomplished biographer, and that I can no further fulfil that office than in faithfully and correctly detailing those materials of his history for which I have the best authority.

PERCIVALL POTT was born on the 26th of December 1713, in that part of Thread-needle-street which is now the site of the new Bank-buildings. His father, whose Christian name was Percivall, married the widow of Mr. Houblon, son of Sir Jacob Houblon; and, in 1717, left her again a widow, and him, their only son, with means very inadequate to their support. The deserted state of Mrs. Pott, joined with a deserving character, and many excellent qualities, could not fail of engaging the attention of her friends, among whom was Dr. Wilcox, bishop of Rochester, her distant relation, who took her son under his immediate patronage. Thus she was enabled to pursue a plan for his education and future views in life, which were the principal objects of her maternal solicitude.

Mr.

Mr. Pott returned her tender care with the utmost affection. Indeed, so enthusiastic was his love for his mother, so great the obligations which he always conceived he owed to her, and so unimpaired by time was his remembrance of them, that, to the last, he never mentioned her, but in terms expressive of sensibility and gratitude.

When seven years old, he was sent to a private school, at Darne in Kent, where the instructions, though very confined, were, to a mind of his quick conception, sufficient to form an early taste for classical knowledge; which, by his own assiduity, without further assistance, was afterwards improved to critical accuracy.

Mr. Pott shewed, very early, a strong propensity to the profession of surgery. Some of his best friends recommended the church, in which he had no inconsiderable prospects of preferment; but neither advice nor persuasion could alter his fixed determination. He was accordingly, in 1729, bound an ap-

prentice to Mr. Nourse, one of the surgeons of St. Bartholomew's hospital. In this situation he had great opportunities of improvement, particularly with regard to anatomy, which was at that time little cultivated in London. Mr. Nourse was one of the few who then gave anatomical lectures; his school was at London-house, in Aldersgate-street; and Mr. Pott was employed in preparing the subjects for demonstration, which laid the foundation of his accurate acquaintance with that science, the basis of chirurgic knowledge. In the hospital he found unlimited opportunities of studying the nature and progress of diseases, and of observing practical surgery.

At that time the art was miserably defective; the instruments were clumsy, and unmanageable; the operations unscientific, and unnecessarily painful; the established mode of practice incumbered with a farrago of useless medicines and applications, tended rather to mislead than direct the inquirer; prescription too frequently held the place of reason; and

want

want of real knowledge was concealed under a pompous garb and specious demeanour. Though labouring under these disadvantages, his intuitive genius soon led him to discriminate between right and wrong, taught what to adopt, what to reject; and enabled him afterwards to break through the trammels of prejudice and custom. During his apprenticeship, his natural vivacity did not prevent the application of a very considerable portion of his time to the study of authors in every branch of surgery: very early in life, he adopted Lord Bacon's advice to a student, to consider one part and one disease at a time, and to become thoroughly acquainted with that before he undertook another; on that plan, he never quitted the immediate object of his inquiry, till he had traced it to every source of information.

Mr. Pott always professed great value and respect for the early writers on the art, and perused their voluminous works with great diligence and sagacity. He frequently ob-

served,

served, that though no great advantage could be derived from them in the practical part, yet whoever studied them would be amply repaid, by their accurate description of diseases, which they pourtrayed from nature. But his reading was not confined to professional books; it was various and extensive; and I think I may venture to say, that his memory never suffered any thing to escape which he had once thought worthy a place in his mind.

In 1736, at twenty-two years of age, having finished his apprenticeship, he immediately applied himself to business. Confident in the fair prospects of industry, he hired a house, of considerable rent, in Fenchurch-street, and took with him his mother, and her daughter by the first husband. Such a young man could not long remain unnoticed: the assistance which is given at the entrance into life, is most valuable and most disinterested; of this Mr. Pott was perfectly sensible, and always acknowledged with gratitude the obligations which he owed to the fostering favourers

vourers of his youth. As the brilliancy of his talents brought his conversation into much request, his connexions were soon universally extended. Besides the families to which his profession introduced him, he became acquainted with most of his cotemporaries of rising and eminent abilities in every profession. The early friendships which he formed were permanent; and it may truly be asserted, that few men have acquired and retained through life more firm or more respectable friends.

In 1744-5, he was elected an assistant-surgeon, and in 1749 he was appointed one of the principal surgeons of St. Bartholomew's hospital. He had now before him sufficient scope for the exercise of those abilities by which mankind have since been so much benefited. The state of surgery was still very imperfect; notwithstanding some sensible and ingenious men, both in this country and in France, had published observations which had enlightened and improved it, still the maxim, "Dolor medecina doloris," remained unrefuted; the

the severe treatment of the old school, in the operative part and in the applications, continued in force; the first principles of surgery, the natural process and powers of healing were either not understood or not attended to; painful and escharotic dressings were continually employed, and the actual cautery was in such frequent use, that, at the times when the surgeons visited the hospital, it was regularly heated and prepared as a part of the necessary apparatus. In the works of several authors, who flourished in the early part of our author's life, we have contrivances for improving these dreadful instruments. Mr. Pott's tutor rigidly adhered to the established practice, and treated with supercilious contempt the endeavours of his pupil to recommend a milder system. But the dictates of truth soon found a welcome reception with the profession, and with the world in general. Mr. Pott lived to see these remains of barbarism set aside, and a more humane and rational plan, of which he was the chief author,

thor, universally adopted. Surgery being thus divested of great part of its horrors, became, comparatively, a pleasing study; for, except on those unfortunate occasions, when the humane feelings of the practitioner must suffer, from the unavoidable necessity of giving pain, the aim and end of the healing art are surely pleasing. To possess the power as well as the inclination to relieve distress, to soften anguish, and in some measure to break the force of those accidents and misfortunes, to which mankind are always liable, must afford, to every feeling mind, the greatest and most sincere pleasure which it is capable of enjoying.

Mr. Pott's affection for his mother prevented him from forming any attachment during her life, which might separate him from her. In 1746, being, to his sorrow, released from this filial engagement, he removed to Bow-lane, and married the daughter of Robert Cruttenden, Esq.; a lady of whom every thing commendable might justly be said,

said, and who, in mental and personal accomplishments, was formed to be his companion,

In the year 1756, an accident befell Mr. Pott; which, though of little consequence in itself, yet, as it displays the vigour and firmness of his mind, and seems to have had considerable influence on his future life, deserves to be recorded in this place:—As he was riding, in Kent-street, Southwark, he was thrown from his horse, and suffered a compound fracture of the leg, the bone being forced through the integuments. Conscious of the dangers attendant on fractures of this nature, and thoroughly aware how much they may be increased by rough treatment, or improper position, he would not suffer himself to be moved until he had made the necessary dispositions. He sent to Westminster, then the nearest place, for two chairmen, to bring their poles; and patiently lay on the cold pavement, it being the middle of January, till they arrived. In this situation he purchased
 7 a door,

a door, to which he made them nail their poles. When all was ready, he caused himself to be laid on it, and was carried through Southwark, over London-bridge, to Watling-street, near St. Paul's, where he had lived for some time—A tremendous distance in such a state! I cannot forbear remarking, that on such occasions a coach is too frequently employed, the jolting motion of which, with the unavoidable awkwardness of position, and the difficulty of getting in and out, cause a great, and often a fatal aggravation of the mischief. At a consultation of surgeons, the case was thought so desperate as to require immediate amputation. Mr. Pott, convinced that no one could be a proper judge in his own case, submitted to their opinion; and the instruments were actually got ready, when Mr. Nourse, who had been prevented from coming sooner, fortunately entered the room. After examining the limb, he conceived there was a possibility of preserving it; an attempt to save it was acquiesced in, and succeeded.

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This case, which Mr. Pott sometimes referred to, was a strong instance of the great advantage of preventing the insinuation of air into the wound of a compound fracture; and it probably would not have ended so happily, if the bone had not made its exit, or external opening, at a distance from the fracture; so that, when it was returned into the proper place, a sort of valve was formed, which excluded air. Thus no bad symptom ensued, but the wound healed, in some measure, by the first intention.—The appearance of Mr. Pott as an author was an immediate effect of this accident^a. During the leisure of his necessary confinement, he planned, and partly executed his treatise upon ruptures, which was completed by the latter end of the year. It was then not an early period of his life;

^a I do not find that Mr. Pott had written any thing previous to this, except the relation of a curious case of tumors, by which the bones were softened. This was presented to the Royal Society soon after he began business, and may be found in the 2d part of the 41st volume of the Philosophical Transactions.

and it is possible, that the busy scene in which he had hitherto been engaged, might have occupied his mind much longer. As he had been thus led on to the age of forty-three, it is by no means impossible that, without some powerful check to the train of his pursuits, he might never have discovered in himself those superior powers of scientific disquisition, that correct taste and masterly command of language, which have placed him in the first rank of medical writers. Engaged, from early youth, in the constant transaction of business, he probably till this period had indulged but little in the pleasures of speculative investigation, but was never afterwards long unemployed in some literary work. Indeed, the flattering reception of his publications, and the gratification of communicating to the world scientific improvements, would have been sufficient to confirm a mind, less ambitious of fame than his, in the habits of an author.

In 1757 he wrote an account of the Hernia Congenita, a complaint not then well understood. Dr. William Hunter, the celebrated anatomist, who was engaged in the same pursuit, inserted a paper in the Medical Commentaries, claiming a priority in the discovery. But I do not mean to enter into the merits of a dispute which, though at that time it caught the attention of the medical world, is now nearly forgotten. Mr. Pott's reply was inserted in the second edition of his treatise on ruptures, and is written with elegance and urbanity.

His observations on the disorder of the corner of the eye, commonly called Fistula Lachrymalis, appeared in 1758. This sensible, well written performance on a complaint which frequently occurs, has, both in matter and manner, considerable merit. In it he explains the situation, describes the various appearances of the disease, and simplifies the method of cure: his arguments were the principal

principal cause of discontinuing the operation by the actual cautery, which was practised and recommended by Mr. Cheffelden, who flourished in the early part of our author's life.

In 1760 was produced his elaborate performance on the nature and consequences of wounds and contusions of the head, fractures of the skull, concussions of the brain, &c. in which, with a perspicuity till then unknown, he separates and arranges the symptoms of each particular species of injury, unfolds the causes and situation of mischief, and points out the most probable means of relief.

In 1762 he published Practical Remarks on the Hydrocele, and some other diseases of the testis, its coats and vessels, illustrated with cases; being a supplement to his general Treatise on Ruptures.

In 1764 he had the honour to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society; at the same time, he presented them with a curious and uncommon case of a hernia of the urinary
b 2
bladder,

bladder, including a stone, which is inserted in the Philosophical Transactions, Vol. LIV.

As the activity of Mr. Pott's mind was equal to his zeal for the advancement of the art, whatever subject appeared to him to have been least considered, or most defectively treated by others, immediately became the object of his researches, and engaged his particular attention. The Fistula in Ano next attracted his notice. The nature of this complaint had been much mistaken, and the operations for its relief were consequently injudicious, horridly severe, and destructive of the parts they were intended to relieve. In 1765 he published a treatise on this subject. His method of reasoning on it is clear, ingenious, and conclusive; but they only can be judges of this inestimable work who have compared the simple operation which it recommends with those usually practised in similar cases in this kingdom, until the latter part of Mr. Pott's life, and even at the present time in other countries.

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The observations and instructions which thus flowed from his ready pen, were enforced by his practice, and illustrated by oral communication; and he was happy to embrace every opportunity which his situation gave him, of conveying the information he had collected to those who had not the same means of acquiring it.

The humane and benevolent disposition of the people of this country is eminently displayed in the many charitable institutions which abound for the relief and protection of the poor, and in the ample support of them. The beneficial influence of hospitals is not shut up within their walls, nor confined to the objects who are there relieved; the blessings which are there distributed revert to their opulent and noble supporters, and are extended to all ranks and conditions of men, by the improvements which the medical art receives from the students who frequent them. In a large hospital there must be opportunities of seeing the greatest possible variety of dis-

eases, such as are either produced or increased by negligence and intemperance, added to those which are met with among the more prudent and better informed part of mankind. In short, all the multiform deviations from health and natural perfection are there, as in one large volume, collected and displayed. Of the advantages arising from such a collection, no person could be more sensible than Mr. Pott; but he also judiciously remarked, that young men often stood in need of an index to point out to them the proper objects for their attention and inquiry. To supply the deficiency, about this time he instituted a course of lectures, the first of which was given at his house in Watling-street. He had not then digested and arranged his ideas, but spoke, as I well remember, with hesitation and reserve: yet even these his first essays bore strong marks of his comprehensive and penetrative mind. In a few courses he overcame all obstacles, and communicated his thoughts with eloquence and ease. He was

not satisfied with following any system which had been laid down by others, as he thought they in general dwelt too much on the operative part, which, though very important, is by no means the most difficult part of surgery, nor the most worthy of attention. The means of preventing the necessity of operations, he observed, should be the first consideration; he therefore formed a plan of his own, the best, perhaps, which could be devised. He began with such general disorders as may affect any part of the human frame, and afterwards proceeded to consider the diseases of each part distinctly, beginning with the head, and descending to the inferior members. He took great pains on every point; and, having the art of being minute without tediousness, demonstrated it with clearness and precision. His manner gave importance to every subject, and impressed his audience with the idea, that the art which he taught was worthy of their highest ambition.

tion. He not only explained the best modern practice with his own observations, but rendered the lecture still more curious and interesting, by a review of the practice of the ancients, and of the gradual progress of improvement which had taken place. This his extensive perusal of authors of all ages had made easy to him; for there was no time of his life when he thought so highly of himself as to imagine that he could receive no light from books. He often said, he began to teach when he had much to learn; and, as he was not actuated by that opinionative wisdom which sometimes attends advanced life, after all his study and experience he confessed, that he still retained a long list of inquirenda. His lectures were constantly attended by a numerous succession of pupils, and have been the means of very extensively disseminating much useful knowledge.

In 1768 he produced a new edition of his book on the Injuries to which the Head is liable

liable from External Violence, accompanied with what is entitled A Few General Remarks, but which is really a complete system on fractures and dislocations. This, I have been informed, he began and completed in a fortnight. The novelty of the doctrine contained in this treatise relates principally to the position of the injured limb. On its publication it met with some opposition, but has now subdued the first prejudices; and I believe I may venture to say, is become almost the universal practice.

The frequent avocations of Mr. Pott towards the west end of the town, where the buildings had prodigiously increased since he began life, making a more central situation necessary, in 1769 he purchased a house near Lincoln's-inn Fields, and resided in it seven years, during which time his pen was not inactive. The hydrocele again employed his thoughts. In 1772 he sent to the press his improved method of passing the seton, so as not to rub or injure the gland in its passage.

Mr.

Mr. Pott took great pains with this subject, and never was perfectly satisfied with what he had done in it. Various other methods have been employed for the cure of this complaint, and practitioners are still divided between them. I must confess that the curative intention does not seem well answered by either of them; they all appear to me to raise more inflammation, and to derange the economy of those tender and sensible parts more than is necessary. I have proposed another, which answers the purpose in a milder and better manner than any I have yet seen; and I feel a satisfaction in saying, that it met with Mr. Pott's approbation. One of our last conversations was on this subject; and, if his life had been prolonged, it was his intention to have practised it^b.

In 1775 he published *Chirurgical Observations* relative to the cataract, the polypus of the nose, the cancer of the scrotum, the different kinds of ruptures, and the mortifi-

^b Vide Vol. III.

cation of the toes and feet, which were valuable additions to his former publications, and were marked with that spirit of observation, perspicuity of reasoning, and candour in discussing controverted points, which distinguish his other productions.

In 1777 he removed to Hanover-square. Here, at an age when most men begin to think of ease and retirement, his active mind led him into a scene more busy and extensive than ever. Sir Cæsar Hawkins, who had long been employed in many of the first families, retired from London, which made no inconsiderable addition to Mr. Pott's former connexions. But, though engaged in business by day, and occupied at home in the evening, in answering letters addressed to him from all parts of Europe, I might say of the world, having seen letters in which he was consulted on cases from Russia, Turkey, and India, as well as from our neighbouring kingdoms, he contrived to find time to add to his former works a treatise on the necessity of amputation

tion in certain cases, in which he argues strongly in favour of truth and humanity, and clearly proves the rectitude of the principles which he has laid down. This seems principally to have been written in answer to Mr. Bilguer, surgeon to the army of the late king of Prussia, who had published against the necessity of amputating in almost any case. The title of his book is “ De Membrorum
 “ Amputatione rarissimè administrandâ, aut
 “ quasi abrogandâ ;” and also, in reply to his commentator, Mr. Tissot, who wrote a treatise, “ Sur l’inutilité de l’amputation des
 “ Membres,” in which he goes even beyond his original, and absolutely sets aside the operation as useless ; he speaks of it in the most opprobrious terms ; he is shocked at the horror of it ; exhorts surgeons to abandon the murderous and cruel method of amputation, with many other expressions equally misapplied. Such futile and absurd imputations can never confute what reason and experience have joined to demonstrate, that many lives
 have

have been saved by the operation, which would otherwise have been infallibly lost. However, as we must suppose that the doctrine which these gentlemen have promulgated arose from humane motives, and upon a conviction that it is well founded, we must at least applaud their intention, though we cannot approve their judgment. But if it were possible that any man could be found capable of writing in defence and support of the unfeeling doctrine, that mutilated men are a burthen to the state, such a work would deserve to be reprobated, and the author's name to be consigned to the detestation of posterity.

In 1779 Mr. Pott published his Remarks on that kind of palsy of the limbs which is frequently found to accompany a particular curvature of the spine. He introduced his first treatise on this subject with doubts and surmises, having just drawn the outline; but, finding his opinion confirmed by experience, he with confidence produced his further remarks on this disease, in 1783, in which he
gives

gives a complete description of the complaint, so little understood before, that those who suffered under it were consigned to their fate, which usually led to inactivity, deformity, and death. In this valuable tract he lays down a very accurate discrimination of this from every other species of paralyfis, and proposes a new and most efficacious method of stopping its progress, and curing it.

This was the last of his literary productions: the mode of cure which he recommends in it he afterwards applied to diseases of the hip-joint, with considerable success. If his life had fortunately been prolonged, it was his intention to publish his opinions on this subject. At the same time, I have great reason to think he would have added an account of those very painful excrescences which are frequently the consequence of long-neglected piles. He had been remarkably successful in the treatment of this afflicting complaint, and thought the disease itself not sufficiently understood, nor the mode by which he succeeded commonly practised; but, as it

was not his custom to begin to write on any subject till he was prepared to finish it, it is to be lamented that his ideas on these and some other important points were not committed to paper. As Mr. Pott conceived these subjects to be of so much importance, I cannot pass them over in silence, though I much regret that they have not been laid before the public in his comprehensive manner^c.

The time now began to approach when Mr. Pott may be said to have attained the summit of that eminence which he owed to himself alone. Though unadorned with any honorary distinction in the profession, he was sought after and employed by persons in the first degree of rank and power; and though he solicited neither honours nor favours for himself, he often successfully employed his influence on behalf of others. He was universally consulted; practitioners referred to him in cases of uncommon difficulty and danger, as their last resource; his extensive ex-

^c Vide Vol. III.

perience,

perience, and his ready application of it, rendered that easy to him, which, to most other men, would have been a painful pre-eminence.

The Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh were not inattentive to his deserts. In 1786 he received a diploma, accompanied by a letter expressive of the sense they entertained of them: the value of the honour was greatly enhanced by his being the first person on whom they had thought proper to bestow it.

(COPY.)

“ SIR, *Edinburgh, Aug. 1, 1786.*

“ It is with peculiar pleasure I obey the commands of the Royal College of Surgeons in acquainting you, that they have this day unanimously elected you an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, a compliment which they think your very distinguished merit justly entitled to.

“ May I add, as an additional mark of the College’s respect, that you are the first Gentleman of the Faculty they have thought proper to bestow the honour on.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ THOMAS HAY, President.”

In the following year the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland presented him with their freedom, in a silver box.

In July 1787 he resigned the office of Surgeon to St. Bartholomew's hospital, after having served it, as he used to say, man and boy, half a century. On the day of his resignation, the annual meeting of the governors was held, and they dined in the great room of the hos-

(COPY.)

HONORARY DIPLOMA.

*Voted to PERCIVALL POTT, Esq. Sept. 9th, 1787, by the
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.*

Whereas it has appeared to us, in full College duly assembled, that Percivall Pott, Esq. has eminently distinguished himself in the science of surgery; now, we being desirous to manifest our approbation of conspicuous merit, do, by virtue of the powers vested in us by his majesty's royal charter, by these presents, elect, constitute, and appoint, the said P. Pott an honorary member of this college, with all the privileges, dignities, and immunities thereunto annexed.

(Signed)

J. WHITEWAY, President.

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pital;

pital; when he was about to retire, the Right Honourable Thomas Harley, president, proposed a health to Mr. Pott, with many thanks for his long, able, and faithful services to that house; which was received with reiterated bursts of applause. Mr. Pott's usual readiness forsook him on this trying occasion: after repeatedly rising to thank the assembly for the compliment they had paid him, he felt himself obliged to sit down in silence. His resolution and presence of mind, though not easily overcome, were not proof against the powerful emotions excited by this public and unexpected testimony of his having acted well, and filled an important station to the advantage of mankind.

It is possible that some of the greatest blessings we enjoy may, by a fortuitous concatenation of events, tend to shorten their own existence. Thus it seemed in the case of Mr. Pott, whose remarkable temperance had ensured him so long a continuance of health and spirits, that he was deceived in himself. Had
he

he been subject to some of the infirmities which usually attend people of his age, as he must necessarily have paid more attention to his general health, his days might possibly have been prolonged. Though he was free from any particular complaint, and his constitution was sound, still it sustained the weight of more than threescore years and ten; to this his mind, busy and chearful as ever, would not permit him to advert. It is painful to relate, that, in the full possession of his faculties, with a frame of body apparently calculated to last much longer, he fell a sacrifice to his own active disposition, and inattention to the first attack of his disorder.

On Thursday, 11th December 1788, he went, in very severe weather, to visit a patient about twenty miles from London; when he returned, he complained that he had caught cold. The next day he lay in bed, a circumstance very uncommon to him; the following day, thinking himself better, he would not submit to the regimen which

had been recommended, but went out as usual; the day after (Sunday, the 14th) the cold was remarkably intense, and it being necessary to repeat the visit in the country, I was happy to save him so inclement a journey; but, at my return, was informed that he had been a round of visits in town, and was just got home, perceiving himself unable to complete his list. A shivering soon seized him, and he went to bed; a fever succeeded, and before night he grew delirious. He passed great part of the night in this state: the next morning, on my asking how he found himself, after a short apparent struggle for recollection, the words of his answer precisely were; "My mind has great propensity to
 "aberration; and I find myself much inclined to talk nonsense, unless I studiously
 "collect my thoughts, and fix them."—Through the whole of his illness, during the intervals of reason, his observations on many subjects were remarkably sensible and pointed; and he seemed particularly attentive

to correctness in his language. The description of the seat of the pain he felt was anatomically exact. He did not appear to doubt of his recovery during several days, though the fever continued, with unremitting violence, in opposition to the best medical assistance, being attended, with the most affectionate assiduity, by Dr. Heberden, Dr. Millman, and Dr. Austin. His head became rather more clear as the disorder advanced, and he seemed more sensible of his danger; on the seventh day he observed, " My lamp is almost extinguished; I hope it has burned for the benefit of others." On the following day, the 22d of December, he expired.

His remains were attended by many of his relations and friends to Aldermary church in Bow-lane, where they were deposited near those of his beloved mother.

On a marble tablet affixed to the wall is the following inscription, by his son the Reverend Joseph Holden Pott, A. M. Archdeacon of St. Alban's, &c.

In Memory
OF PERCIVALL POTT, Esq. F. R. S.

Surgeon of St. Bartholomew's Hospital during Forty-two Years,
Who departed this Life, December 22d, 1788, aged 75.

He was

Singularly eminent in his Profession,
To which he added many new Resources, and which he illustrated
With matchless Writings.

Let Posterity revolve the Sum of his Experience,
That the World may still enjoy the Benefit of his
Successful Practice.

He honoured the collective Wisdom of past Ages :
The Labours of the Ancients were familiar to him :
He scorned to teach a Science of which he had not traced the growth ;
He rose, therefore, from the Form to the Chair.

Learn, Reader, that the painful Scholar can alone become
The Faithful Teacher.

But his Studies had a double Issue :
Whilst he gathered the Knowledge of his Predecessors,
He perceived their Errors, and corrected them ;
He discovered their Defects, and supplied them.
Original in Genius, prompt in Judgment, rapid in Decision,
He directed Knowledge to its proper Ends ;
But pursued them when the Aids of Information were exhausted ;
The last Steps, therefore, and great Improvements,
Were his own.

His Integrity is before his Judge ;
Without it, his Skill might have profited Mankind,
But could have claimed no Record within these Walls,

His private Virtues,
His signal Tenderness to his Family,
Completed an Example,
Amiable, Useful, Great.

THE genius of Mr. Pott, however assisted by art, was certainly of the first order by nature, as appears by the variety and perfection of his attainments. He was the most eminent of his time as a writer, as a teacher, and as a practitioner in surgery; and his merits in each of these characters were most extensive. Possessed with an enthusiastic love of excelling, without which genius is inert, he was not contented with any kind of mediocrity in himself.

As an author, his language is correct, strong, and animated. There are few instances, if any, of such classical elegance, united with so much profound scientific acuteness. In his surgical inquiries he studiously avoided reference to obscure and general

neral principles; he preferred reasoning by analogy and induction from established facts; a method certainly more safe and more accommodated to the present state of physiological knowledge. He introduces anatomy and physiology, whenever it is necessary, to illustrate and distinguish diseases; but never confuses his reader with uncertain hypotheses in pathology founded on physiological principles. He was of opinion, and it is the opinion of Newton, that hypothesis has no place in any physical science. To place the disease in a distinct point of view; to demonstrate wherein it consisted, and the changes which must be effected to remove it; to point out the remedies which would most safely and certainly produce those changes, were the objects to which he directed his whole attention. His remedies always strongly marked his intention; they were decided and consistent; and he was the principal author of that simplicity which distinguishes the present practice from that of our ancestors. With
these

these views he applied himself to every part of the surgical art, and improved both the pathology and cure of many diseases. His treatment of fistulous sores, and his history and cure of the caries of the corpora vertebrarum, were perhaps his greatest works; but his improvements, as we have seen, extended to many other subjects; and his researches introduced such novelties in the practice of surgery, that his life must ever be considered as a great epoch in the history of that art.

As a teacher, he had acquired the faculty of speaking readily, with great point and energy, of delivering the most prolix and intricate sentences with incredible perspicuity and correctness, and of enforcing what he said with a most harmonious and expressive elocution. He allowed no excuse for defects in himself; he always avowed that excellent maxim, “Cui lecta potenter erit res, nec facundia deferet hunc, nec lucidus ordo.”

As a practitioner in surgery, we must
apply

apply to him all the essential qualifications, sound judgment, cool determination, and great manual dexterity. He had seen much of practice, and what he had seen he had digested, by reading, writing, and lecturing on those subjects.

In the transaction of business there was a freedom and openness in his manner, which evidently arose from a consciousness that the opinion which he delivered was founded on experience. In every instance he shunned affectation and singularity; and his conduct in all situations was an appeal to the good sense of mankind. Thus he acquired the universal confidence of the profession; and, without any accidental or external help, he raised himself to the greatest dignity which man can attain,—the first rank in a liberal profession.

DOMESTIC virtues make no great figure in history; yet the domestic virtues of distinguished

guished men should not be forgotten, because they promote the cause of virtue; besides, great and amiable qualities reflect lustre on each other. The ambition, the industry, and enterprise of Mr. Pott, did at no time interfere with the duties of a husband and a father: though his ready wit and brilliant conversation, abounding with interesting anecdotes of his own observation, and with happy quotations from modern and ancient authors, rendered him a conspicuous character in all parties, he was most happy, and not less to be admired in the circle of his family. In their society he spent much the greater part of his leisure hours, and in such a manner as to be the object of the utmost affection and veneration to a numerous offspring of children and grandchildren.

The person of Mr. Pott was elegant, though lower than the middle size; his countenance animated and expressive; his manners and deportment were graceful; and his remarkable

markable vigour and activity seemed unabated by age.

The labours of the greatest part of his life were without relaxation; an increasing family required his utmost exertion: of late years he had a villa at Neasden; and in the autumn usually passed a month at Bath, or at the sea side. Thus, though he gathered, as he expressed it, some of the fruit of the garden which he had planted as he went along, and always lived in a generous and hospitable manner, at the same time bestowing on four sons and four daughters a liberal and necessarily expensive education, and applying large sums to their establishment during his life-time, he left an ample provision for them at his decease. Among his papers was found, what he had often mentioned, a small box, containing a few pieces of money*, being the whole which he ever received from the wreck of his father's fortune. With this was de-

* Under 5l.

posited an exact account of every individual fee which a long life of business had produced—abundant evidence of well-spent time, and the industrious application of abilities, to which the *res angusta domi*, at the commencement, probably acted more powerfully as an incentive than as an obstacle.

J. E.

HANOVER-SQUARE,

March 20, 1790.

posited an exact account of every individual
ice, which a long and business had pro-
duced—abundant of well-spent time,
and the industry of abilities, to
which the very nature of the commence-
ment, probably acted more powerfully as an
incentive than as an obstacle.



J. E.

HANOVER SQUARE.

March 20, 1790. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th inst. in relation to the proposed establishment of a library for the use of the poor in the parish of St. Martin in the City of London. I have the pleasure to inform you that the Committee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, have agreed to the establishment of such a library, and have directed the Secretary to the Society to take the necessary steps for the execution of the same. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. E.

1790

